

SAINT CAMILLUS DE LELLIS

Founder of the Clerics Regular, Ministers of the Sick.

THE WONDERFUL WAYS OF GOD.

WE—exiles in a “valley of tears”—sometimes find it hard to realise the truths which, nevertheless, are deeply rooted in our hearts. Among these may be the feeling that is embodied in the words “Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, and today, and forever.” But, now and then, across the pages of the world’s history flashes a light which reveals the unchanged and unchanging Heart of the God made Man for love of the sinful, the sick and the sorrowful creatures whom He loves to the end—not, alone to the end of His mortal life, but to the end of time—yes—and through the endless eternity.

So it is that many sweet, efficacious words of His go on doing their work all over the earth, as the years speed on. So it is that, occasionally, He raises up a saint, a specially beloved and enlightened disciple, to carry out in precept and in practice some special mission and to draw out the manifestations of the Saviour’s unaltered Will, to suit the needs of the present day. And this was the case when He called into being the great heart and ardent soul of St. Camillus de Lellis. Millions, perhaps, have incurred a lasting debt of gratitude to that heroic son of Italy, all unconscious of their benefactor. Thousands have been indebted to him for the health and life of the body, and the everlasting life of the soul. Countless are those who owe to his prayers and example the grace that enabled them to walk in his footsteps. And yet comparatively few know more about him than that his name is enrolled on the list of the canonised, in honour of his sanctified devotion to the service of the sick poor.

Therefore, we turn to the annals of the crowned servants of God, and reverently peruse the records of him who should fitly rank among the martyrs of charity.

A CHILD OF GRACE.

This title is often given to those whose parents have lived for many years in expectation of a new life to gladden their home.

These parents are usually prayerful, patient, and full of trustful submission to God’s decrees. And we have good reason to believe that Camilla de Lellis—the mother of our Saint—was a woman of more than ordinary virtue. In fact, it is written of her that the birth of Camillus, “when his mother was nearly sixty—with grey hair and wrinkled face—procured for her from her wondering neighbours the glorious surname of St. Elizabeth”

She had earned that name, also, by her fervent piety, which shone more remarkably in the eyes of the world because she and her husband were descended from two of the most illustrious families in Abruzzo. Warriors and singularly learned men had honoured the long line of the descendants of the house of Lellis. Kings had been proud to avail themselves of the gifts which distinguished the ancestors of Giovanni—the father of Camillus— and he, considering it an imperative obligation to serve the kingdom to which he owed his extensive patrimony, was one of the foremost leaders of the Italian expeditions against the French and the Turks in the early part of the sixteenth century.

His wife, Camilla Compellio of Laureto, in Abruzzo, was nobly born and nobly endowed in a spiritual and temporal sense. It is related that “a few days before her son saw the light, she dreamed that she had given birth to a boy with a cross on his breast, who was followed by several children decorated in the same way.”

At first Camilla was startled, fancying that these cross-bearers were forerunners of disasters for her child, but she soon regained her usual peace that it is probable she was comforted by some supernatural insight into the future, some gleams from the distant days when her son and his consecrated followers would do battle, fearlessly armed with the Sign of the Cross, on his coveted battleground, the bed-side of the sick, the suffering and the dying.

On the 25th May, in the Holy Year, 1550, Camillus was given by God in answer to his mothers prayers. Two days afterwards, he was baptized in the Church of San Michele; Gentile, Baron of Toricella, and Simona, his wife, were the

sponsors.

The baby was a true Italian, with olive skin and dark eyes, which afterwards became unspeakably soft and pitiful whenever suffering drew near him. He grew rapidly, much to the satisfaction of his father, who counted the years impatiently until the boy could stand by his side at the next summons to war.

DARK CLOUDS.

Heavy, indeed, were the clouds that gathered over her setting sun for Camilla de Lellis. The custom in the family, and his father's wish, determined that Camillus should be sent to school as early as possible. He was still but a mere child when he showed to the full the inheritance bequeathed to him by his forefathers. He was a poet and a soldier by nature; even his pious mother could lawfully delight in his gifts; but, unfortunately, he was soon led completely away into the company of some who admired and amused him, and who fostered his young vanity.

"Scarcely," says his biographer, "had he learned to read and write before he gave himself up to cards and dice, and other amusements that worldlings seek. His only intellectual pleasure was the reciting of pastoral odes, etc., and in this he excelled—much to his vainglory."

At Camilla's advanced age, sorrow and care tell powerfully on the feeble frame. She sank rapidly, and died the death of a saint, when her son was just entering his fourteenth year. He grieved bitterly for her; however, we have no record of any change in his dispositions. On the contrary, when he was barely nineteen, he used all his persuasive influence with his father to offer his services to the Nobles of Venice against the Turks.

The old military enthusiasm woke up in Giovanni de Lellis, and the result was that he travelled with his son to Amona, with the intention of procuring a commission among the troops. But Giovanni had miscalculated his strength. He fell dangerously ill at the Castle of St. Lupidio, near the holy House of Loreto, and died there after a few days, deeply penitent for his sins and fortified by the last Sacraments.

Camillus afterwards acknowledged that his father's death was by no means his greatest trial, for a personal misfortune befell him which touched him far more seriously. A slight scratch on his ankle brought on a festering sore. "I purposely mention this wound," writes his biographer, "because it was the principal means which Providence used to heal his soul, by giving him an acquaintance with the hospitals, from which, we may say, our Congregation arose."

A sharp attack of fever, as well as the continual pain, obliged him to dismiss the idea of joining the army. Even when he rallied, his convalescence was slow, and he lay listlessly on his couch for hours watching the travellers through Fermo, where he had been struck down on his journey home.

Lonely and weak, subject to repeated spasms of feverish irritation, the boy went through his first experience of what sickness is among strangers. He was not rich enough to purchase all the medicaments and attendance he wished for, and he was young enough to miss the tenderness and solicitude which money cannot buy. Probably, he often yearned for his gentle mother—probably that yearning brought back the holiest memories of his childhood. At all events he was ready to meet the touch of grace when, one day, he saw two Franciscan Friars on their way through the city. Exceedingly prayerful and exceedingly forgetful of earthly things, these Fathers seemed to him, as they walked quietly along with downcast eyes and closed lips.

Immediately, Camillus made an impetuous vow to dedicate himself to God in the Order of the Friars Minor. He knew a good deal of their manner of life; for his uncle, Father Paolo Lauretano, was Guardian of the Monastery of San Bernardino, at Aquila. This new resolve appeared to act like a charm on Camillus. He tried to shake off his languor and hurried away to Aquila. But Father Paolo was a prudent man. He feared that his nephew's reformation was too sudden to be lasting. Besides, his health was uncertain, his leg continued to be troublesome, and how could a person of such doubtful promise be received into the rigorous and apostolic Order of the Franciscans? He was refused admittance and, at once, apparently heedless of his vow, he put away the impulse in a fit of annoyance at being rejected.

THE PURSUIT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

In spite of his waywardness, Camillus was an object of peculiar solicitude in the Eternal Mind of Him Who foresaw the future sanctity of the straying sheep. Again, the Good Shepherd calmly and earnestly pursued the soul that would yet lead multitudes to heaven in its train.

The wound in the injured leg broke out afresh, and Camillus, hearing that there were exceptionally skilful surgeons in the hospital of San Giacomo, in Rome, determined to try their treatment. We have no explanation of the fact noted—i.e., that “he placed himself in the hospital as a servant and stayed there for some months. He was not quite cured when he was dismissed by the superintendent for his violent temper, quarrelsome disposition and the unbridled passion for gambling which caused him to neglect the sick and remain indifferent to their sufferings.”

Although the cure was not satisfactory, he contrived to enrol himself in the service of the Venetian Republic, against which Selim, the Grand Sultan of the Turks, had declared war. “He held various offices, both naval and military, under this Government, and went through many dangers, both on sea and on land. In Corfu he was at the point of death, from fever, when, as he frequently affirmed, the Sacraments of Confession and Communion restored him to life.”

When this war ended, Camillus, in his thirst for glory, took service at the port of Naples, under the Spanish crown. Dangers of all sorts threatened his safety, but he invariably escaped death. At length, “during a voyage from Palermo to Naples, in a Neapolitan galley, such a storm arose that the passengers gave themselves up for lost, and Camillus, no less frightened than his companions, renewed his vow of taking the habit of St. Francis. This was on the 28th October, the day consecrated to the memory of the Apostles, Simon and Jude—the latter being immemorially invoked as the patron of almost hopeless cases.

Few were more hopeless and needy than Camillus when the shattered vessel drifted into the Bay of Naples. Carried away by his passion for gambling, he had “staked everything he possessed—his sword, his gun, his military cloak—until he left himself literally a beggar, and finally stood, hat in hand, at the door of a church in Manfredonia, craving alms as a distressed soldier.”

There, Signor Antonio di Nicastro offered Camillus employment as a labourer at the erection of the new Capuchin Church. The offer was met with a haughty refusal. Suddenly, however, the recollection of his vow glanced back into his mind, and just as suddenly he was impelled to associate himself with the Capuchins, by serving them. Signor Antonio’s forgiving charity introduced Camillus to the Father overseer of the works, “who put under his care two asses to carry stone, water and lime to the buildings.”

Thus began the victory over nature in this predestined soul; for, in good truth, the combat was one of continual humiliations and petty trials, as well as countless discomforts, galling beyond measure to the tenderly reared son of wealth and honours. Strange and sad it was that the impulse of divine grace quickly lost its influence, and that he endured all the toil and hardships of his lot in order “to gain a few crowns to enable him to return to his favourite gambling, and even to his soldier’s life, if he could manage it.” Despite his wilfulness, Camillus was being imperceptibly led on to the threshold of the wonderful task before him, and he was soon to be borne back to the fold of God’s chosen Guard of Honour.

He was sent on an errand to the Capuchins of the Castello di San Giovanni, and the Father Guardian, discerning the spiritual combat, was moved to win some confidence from Camillus and to suggest some maxims to him for driving away the tempter. There gentle words went straight to the heart of the impulsive Camillus, and he humbled himself so far as to beg a prayer from the priest.

An hour after, as he was riding home to Manfredonia, “a ray of heavenly light shone into his soul, and awakened in him such intense grief for his sins that his heart sank under the weight of his contrition. He dismounted impetuously, and, kneeling on the roadside, he exclaimed: “Wretch that I am—most miserable of beings! Why did I not know my blessed Lord? Why was I deaf to His entreaties? Why have I heaped offences on Him? Forgive me, gracious Lord, and grant me time to do penance!”

This penitent cry was ended by a renewal of his vow, a most efficacious renewal, for, from that day, 2nd February, 1575, his conscience never accused him of any mortal sin.

A TRUE PENITENT.

So manifest was the conversion that the Fathers in Manfredonia permitted Camillus to commence the probationary period without delay. In ardent devotion, in incessant mortification, none surpassed him—nay, more, though penitent, he considered himself bound to crucify his body and mortify his hitherto rebellious will with unequalled severity. He begged to be accepted as a lay brother, shrinking from the thought that “one so unworthy might be advanced to the priestly dignity.” “And so, from day to day,” the chronicler tells us, “he advanced to perfection in virtue—chiefly in obedience and humility—till he was honoured by everyone with the name of the humble brother” It pleased God that, after a few months, his old wound should be brought on by the rubbing of the rough habit on his ankle, and it became so much worse that, with great regret, the Fathers decided that they could not retain him.

The days which followed this bitter disappointment were days of agony for Camillus. Then the hope sprang up that the surgeons of San Giacomo might cure a more submissive patient than he had been when he was formerly under their care. He lost no time in setting off for Rome, where he made such sincere atonement for the past that many were bewildered at the transformation of a sinner into a saint. By a special providence, he had for guide the wondrously gifted St. Philip Neri, under whose direction Camillus rose to the highest degree of holiness. His wound was healed after a martyrdom of four years, and the Franciscans gladly welcomed him to their novitiate.

No sooner did he put on the habit than the wound re-opened. All agreed that the Will of God was declared. He was not destined to be a Friar Minor. He was wanted elsewhere. And the Holy Spirit seemed to bid him go devote himself to the service of the sick in the hospital of San Giacomo for the Incurables.

The reception he met there was a delighted “welcome.” He was installed Superintendent, but none were as prompt in undertaking the lowliest services, none so indefatigable in caring for the most neglected and repulsive sufferers as Camillus—who had charge of all!

THE BEGINNING OF HIS LIFE-WORK.

He had entered on his appointed mission at last, and the Beatitude—“I was sick and you visited Me”—seemed always shining before his eyes. No one knew better than Camillus how many grievances cried piteously for redress in the hospitals of the day. The poor were treated more like hunted and despised animals than like human beings. Careless, selfish attendants did as they pleased, day and night. Nourishment was sparingly given. Medicines were administered at random. Christian compassion was scanty. Worst of misfortunes—there were instances of priests who neglected their duty, so that the sick frequently wasted away and died without the consolations of religion and the Sacraments.

“Can I contend against such a crowd of evils?” was the question Camillus put to himself one evening, standing in the principal ward of the hospital. The answer came like a whisper from heaven. A voice seemed to say: “Found a Congregation of pious men, who will tend the sick for the love of God, with the care of a mother for her sick child.”

From that instant we may date the origin of the Clerics Regular—in the year 1582, about the Feast of the Assumption—though Camillus only projected the establishment of a simple Congregation of laymen for the assistance of the hospitals in Rome.

He began by drawing down the blessing of God on his design. He spent whole nights on his knees, imploring light and strength for himself and his future companions. He redoubled his numerous practices of penance. Then, with a very anxious heart, he disclosed his longings to five persons connected with hospital work, in whom he had confidence. Such unction was imparted to his pleading that they declared their readiness to follow him “in life and death, in prosperity and adversity.” And, in spite of the opposition that was raised, even by virtuous men, the little band remained true to their promise.

They needed courage, indeed; for the guardians of the hospital, among them a future Cardinal, Monsignor Cusano, forbade even the little private meetings and devotions which Camillus and his friends had begun. They were most obedient in relinquishing their pious practices, but their charity and zeal continued as warm as ever and merited the signal favours granted to Camillus.

The same night Camillus, worn out with grief, fell asleep while he kept his nightly vigil before the Crucifix. As he slept he grew conscious of the infinite compassion of our Divine Lord. He thought he looked up at the Crucifix, and heard the words: "Fear not, O faint of heart! Go on trustfully! I will be with you, and will help you!"

Moreover, Our Lord deigned to renew and confirm this sublime encouragement: kneeling one day before the Crucifix, Camillus saw the Saviour's Hands detach themselves from the Cross, and the whisper reached his ears: "Why are you troubled? This is My work, not yours. Persevere."

Little wonder that the Saint grew confident of success, and that he addressed himself to one who could further his plans. This friend was Marc Antonio Coltselli, a penitent of the renowned St. Philip Neri. He entered warmly into Camillus's views, and recommended them to the notice of Father Francesco Tarugi, of the Oratory, who exclaimed: "How useful such a Congregation would be in times of pestilence!"

Camillus could restrain his enthusiasm no longer. He began with a preparation for the priesthood, and humbly applied himself to the rudiments of Latin under private tuition, supplemented by attending the classes at the Jesuit's College. "It cannot be denied," said his masters, "that this man has come late to school, but he will hasten on, and do great things in the Church." This opinion was shared by the ecclesiastical authorities, and there was no hesitation in allowing Camillus to be ordained on Whit Sunday, 1584. Immediately after, the Governors of San Giacomo elected him chaplain of their little church near the Porta del Popolo, called "The Madonna dei Miracoli."

FOUNDATION OF THE MINISTERS OF THE SICK.

Of his first five confidants, only three helpers were now ready to put themselves into the hands of a leader, for Benigno had been transferred to another city, and Father Ludivoco Altobelli had been appointed Prior of the hospital of San Giovanni. There remained Bernardino Norcino, Curzio Lodi, and Father Francesco Profeta. These three were a host in the army of God, so eager were they to take up His yoke and bear the sweet burden of charity on their willing shoulders. After several consultations the four agreed to break entirely with the world; to leave the hospital of San Giacomo, where they would not be free to act as they wished; to put on the priestly cassock—thus making themselves as Christ's Ministers of the sick—and to begin their new life in the hospital of San Spirito. This they did on the 16th September, 1584—from which date they occupied themselves wholly in the service of the sick "according to some short rules that Camillus had written."

Their charity and zeal were so intense, that even the most active of ordinary nurses were soon outdistanced in skill and energy, as well as in Christlike tenderness, by Camillus and his disciples. Veneration was quickly roused, but so, too, were jealousy and ill-will. And, when this storm abated, a heavier trial befell them in the dangerous illness which prostrated Camillus and Curzio. It had been brought on by "excessive fatigue, unwholesome food, and insufficient clothing. Their beds were three mats, and the bed covering, two quilts. The room they slept in was on the banks of the Tiber, in a spot haunted by malaria."

Camillus cheerily told them that Our Lord favoured them with this visitation, that they might learn, by their own infirmities, to "become masters in the school of suffering, and might come forth from it more zealous in feeling for, and assisting, their sick brethren." It is pleasing to note that the Governors of San Giacomo cordially offered a room to Camillus, and Father Altobelli gave a brotherly reception to Curzio. Both recovered slowly, and, while they were still convalescent, returned to their daily toil in San Spirito.

As it would be "tempting Providence" to stay in their miserable rooms, Camillus thankfully used an unexpected alms to rent a house in the Via delle Botteghe. The report of the sanctity of Camillus and his companions attracted priests and laymen alike. The annalist goes on to say that "the Institute was so laborious, so repugnant to all natural inclinations, that some delayed, some abandoned the thought of it, and only a few remained—robust in body, inspired with true courage, enemies of themselves, and willing to die in any place, however filthy and infected, for the love of the Lord God."

The first idea that guided Camillus was simply to lend the much-needed assistance to the hospitals of Rome. Gradually it dawned on him that his views should be extended, and that THE MASTER wished the whole world to benefit by the

new step. It was disclosed to the future Founder that the principal object of the Order should be “to strengthen men in their last conflict, and console them in their mortal agony.”

Persons of every class began to crave the assistance of the “Members of the Congregation of Father Camillus,” for their sanctified attendance on the agonising. Appeals came from private houses and hostels of every grade—such reiterated appeals that Camillus, with the consent of his companions, ordained that whenever they were summoned by day or night the members should hasten to assist the dying.

This clause was inserted in the written rule, shortly before the death of Pope Gregory XIII., in April, 1585: Another consultation with the pioneers of the Order settled their future name—i.e., “Ministers of the Sick,” also called “Clerics Regular.”

ONWARD AND HEAVENWARD.

The first to pass onward into the eternal kingdom was Bernardino Norcino. From his youth he had been accustomed to self-denial, and his close union with God had glorified his poverty. Camillus came in contact with him when he was keeper of stores at San Giacomo.. Previously he had been a wood-seller. His habit of ejaculatory prayer had distinguished him from his childhood, and he used to spend the hours between the evening “Angelus” and midnight in uninterrupted devotions. His confessor asserted that Our Blessed Lord sometimes showed Himself to Bernardino in the consecrated Host, under the form of a lovely Child.

With all his piety, Bernardino was a bright, warmhearted toiler, and his coaxing ways made it almost impossible to refuse his requests. “God and man,” it was often said, “never turned a deaf ear to Bernardino.” The very moment he closed his eyes in death Camillus whispered, “He has gone straight to Heaven.”

Perhaps it was his intercession which obtained the astonishing influx of members. “Camillus thought it neither reasonable nor expedient that such a number should live together in community without the sanction of the Holy See.” He knew no dignitary of the Church who could present his petition to the Pope. But, meeting Cardinal Mondovi, by chance, he thought he saw so much benevolence in the kindly old Prelate, that he ventured to speak to his Eminence. His cause was won. The Cardinal readily undertook the presentation of the necessary documents. The Pope, who had frequently heard the praises of the “Ministers of the Sick” recommended the papers to the official examination, and so favourable was the report of the consultors that the congregation was approved on the 18th March, 1586, leave being given to the members to live together in poverty, chastity, and obedience, and the service of the sick and plague-stricken, not bound to this by vows, but freely and voluntarily. They were to be governed by a priest elected every three years from among the members. Camillus was unanimously chosen first Superior.

A special audience with the Holy Father was granted to Camillus. He begged Pope Sixtus to permit the members of the new institute to wear a cross of red cloth on their cassock and mantle; and the request, being referred to the Commission of the Bishops and Regulars, was considered “becoming and necessary. The brief confirming this decision was received by Camillus on the 26th June.

The founder’s next step was to seek a more commodious house, with a church attached. He particularly coveted the Church of St. Mary Magdalen, and in a while the charity of some friends secured it for him, as well as the adjoining houses—the entire acquisition being always looked on as the first house of the Order.

Not quite two years had elapsed before the Institute began to multiply itself. The first affiliation was established in Naples. The hospital for incurables in that city was in a lamentable state of neglect. The attempts which had been made at bringing some sort of order into it invariably proved failures. It was precisely the place to attract Camillus, and it was with unspeakable gladness he asked thirteen of his religious to go with him to that harvest-field. His appearance in it wrought an instantaneous change. Nobles and wealthy citizens caught the contagion of his charity, and thronged forward to assist the “Ministers of the Sick.” No service was too difficult or too disgusting for that noble band, headed by Camillus and his priests. Ladies of rank and wealthy matrons protested that they should not be excluded from the blessed ministrations. Hence, it came to pass that the most destitute and most repulsive sufferers were now the most carefully tended, and a

chorus of grateful praise ascended to heaven for the miraculous efficacy given to the example and teachings of the beloved Father Camillus de Lellis.

Undoubtedly, the guardian angels of Naples had led him there to confront the angel of death, for a fleet from Spain brought troops who were discovered to be so fearfully a prey to pestilence that the vessels were sent for quarantine to Pozzuoli. The men were taken ashore to the hospital of the Annunziata, and there they died in multitudes. Camillus had returned to Rome, but five of his religious hurried off from the new convent at Naples to the service of the dying soldiers. Awful scenes awaited them, more than they could contend with. Others joined them in haste, and all laboured with superhuman fortitude. It was only when they had laid their poor sufferers to rest in the arms of God that they, too, were struck down by the scourge, and the crown of such a martyrdom of faith and love was granted to three of the brave combatants of Christ's own legions.

Nevertheless, "the seed that was cast into the earth, yielded fruit a hundredfold." Postulants continued to implore admission into the Congregation. The greater number were trained to be angels of mercy by the master-hand of the Founder. Some died with the joy of angels shining in their bright faces, for the guide of their religious life had succeeded in teaching the grand maxim of absolute rest in the sovereign Will above them.

"A LIVING SAINT."

The voice of Rome persisted in giving that title to Camillus, while he, sinking into the depths of his humility, forgot his countless deeds of marvellous charity, and put his undivided trust in the mercy of God and the Precious Blood of Christ. "Lord," he often exclaimed, "Thy Blood must save me." He seemed to expect, from hour to hour, the summons to appear at the judgment seat, saying, sometimes, that he lived in the world as in an inn, where a man lodges for the night and departs next morning. "When I think of death," he once said, "I tremble and betake myself to the poor sick, to beg them to intercede for me." Yet, again, he was frequently seen transported with divine love, his face shining with joyous light, and his body lifted lightly from the ground, as if following his spirit to the land that he drew so close to by his lively faith. Often and often, while saying Mass, he was rapt in ecstasy, and was with difficulty recalled to himself. And then this glowing love, craving an outlet, incited him to make all speed to go and gain as many souls as possible for God.

"He occasionally preached in the public places of Rome, for no one ventured to lay restrictions on him who was so universally revered and loved. Who could deny veneration to Camillus? His eyes, we are told, were divinely illuminated to behold in the countenances of the most wretched invalids the gracious lineaments of the King of Glory," so he hung over them in rapture with strange, tender words of delight, which showed that he was completely absorbed in contemplating the living images of the Crucified.

"Naturally," writes his biographer, "he was inclined to melancholy, but when in the hospital he seemed to change his nature, communicating to the place the joy which radiated from him. His presence alone refreshed and comforted the weariest and most afflicted. The more menial the services to be rendered, the greater his gaiety, and while cleansing the patients or dressing their loathsome sores, he felt himself, as he declared, 'in an earthly Paradise.'"

The day was too short for him, as he enlightened and purified their souls, at the same time as he was their most diligent physician and nurse. Heaven will yet reveal how many he led to repentance, how many died the death of the predestined in his arms. The hospital was his home. "He no longer lived in himself, but Jesus Christ and his poor lived in him."

In his exhortations to his religious, the ever-recurring theme was, "Love, ardent, self-annihilating love for our own special ministry. Readiness to die, readiness to live in abjection and toil for those whom we serve. Readiness to be as slaves to them." And his brethren knew well that he asked nothing of them that he did not daily practise with undiminished fervour.

Supernatural knowledge was constantly vouchsafed to the Saint. Power was bestowed on him to read the consciences of the dying. Instances are preserved of patients who were on the point of dying in mortal sin or without the Sacraments, when Camillus was interiorly warned of their danger, and brought them into the path of salvation.

He gave no truce to his supplications, while he busied himself externally. He said, "The hospitals are an inland sea, but the recommendation of the dying is a shoreless ocean, for it is world wide." The spiritual veils that hide the beauty and

value of souls seemed, in his case, to be withdrawn, so unutterably intense were his strivings to secure their eternal salvation. He repeatedly dwelt on the injunction of St. Philip Neri, "Persevere, Father, in this holy office of charity to the dying, for I tell you for your comfort, that I have seen the angels of the Lord putting words into the mouths of one of your Fathers while he was recommending the soul of a dying man, at whose death-bed I, also, was present."

The Saint's charity embraced the wide circle of the forlorn poor of every condition, and he confessed that his sharpest trial was to be without means of relieving them. Kind friends were liberal to the holy petitioner, and it was scarcely creditable what an amount of alms passed through his hands. Few could resist him when he whispered softly, "Blessed is he that thinks upon the poor and needy—the Lord will deliver him in the evil day—the day that decides his eternity." The bashful poor were exceedingly dear to him; he found many precious pearls of holiness among these patient, silent sufferers. Nor did he forget the prisoners. How could he—as his contrition continually renewed the remembrance of the wanderings of his early days?

Even animals, when ill-treated, or in pain, roused the Saint's affectionate pity for distress. "In the Isle of Ischia he found a dog with a broken leg. He fed it every day while he stayed there, and on leaving he begged the servant to attend to the maimed creature, adding, "This dog is one of God's creatures. I, too, have a bad leg, and I know the misery of not being well able to walk."

Seldom, indeed, did he mention the incessant torture he bore from the inflamed and bleeding sore. He was such a lover of penance, that he called the five chronic infirmities which never left him at ease—"the five mercies of God" to him. And, instead of looking on them as reasons for dispensation, he heaped mortification on his hardly-trying body.

He ate so little that his fast was never relaxed. He never yielded to his thirst, though this was a more than ordinary trial. He disciplined himself every day, wore a haircloth, and a tight steel chain around his waist. He allowed himself very scanty sleep, and often spent the night watching the sick, or in prayer before his beloved Crucifix.

And his responsibilities grew heavier with the rapid increase of members, as Italy began to appreciate at its full worth the blessing which had been granted in the foundation of the "Ministers of the Sick."

NEW FOUNDATIONS.

We have spoken of the first filiation of Santa Maria, Porta Coeli, at Naples. The renown of that monastery awoke attention everywhere, and the authorities at Bologna begged Cardinal Paleotti, their Archbishop, to ask Camillus for a similar convent. Camillus answered that there were not enough priests and that few of those who wished to join his congregation had the pecuniary means of studying for the priesthood.

If your congregation were erected into an Order, I am certain many priests would join it," said the Cardinal. "Do you wish this to be forwarded?"

Camillus gave a thankful consent. But before any formal decree could be issued Pope Sixtus died. It was reserved to Pope Gregory XIV. to set the solemn seal on the life work of Saint Camillus.

In the interval, fresh glorious manifestations of the self-sacrificing spirit of the congregation had gone on under the eyes of the ecclesiastical tribunals of Rome. First—a deadly disease broke out among the poor velvet-weavers on the Quirinal Hill, and, but for the indefatigable exertions of the "Ministers of the Sick," there was little doubt that this plague would have wrought havoc in the city.

Secondly—a season of far-reaching famine was the prelude to a pestilence which carried off thousands. Through the horrors which surrounded him, Camillus went to and fro as if gifted with miraculous strength and miraculous powers. Food, wine and medicine were multiplied in his stores and in the stores of those who besought his blessing on their charitable provision. Numbers of unprejudiced witnesses gave testimony to the renewal of the nourishment for the sick by unseen hands and affirmed that no sooner had the last drops in the wine-barrels been drained, than, immediately, a richer flow mounted to the brim.

Still, the Saint laboured and economised, and regulated the distribution of the supplies with unwearied diligence. Five of his spiritual children died of the fearful disease which carried off three thousand of their patients in the hospital of St. Sixtus. The fury of the pestilence raged for many weeks, and then there was a sudden cessation.

The reward that Camillus and his religious so richly deserved was at last granted by the Sovereign Pontiff. The Bull that confirmed the Order, and enriched it with various privileges, was published on the 21st of September, 1591, and, on the following Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Camillus and a chosen number of his companions made their profession.

In June, 1594, Camillus set out for Milan and Genoa to found other houses of the Order. The following year Pope Clement VIII. asked Camillus to send a number of the Ministers of the Sick with the Italian troops on their way to recover Stringonia, in Hungary. The eight members who were appointed did glorious service on the battlefields and in the hospitals.

In 1596, a house of the Order was founded at Bologna. Moreover, demands poured in on Camillus from various quarters, He attended first to the request from Florence, then to Ferrara, Messina, and Palermo. The city of Nola hailed the "Ministers of the Sick" as their truest friends during the awful plague of 1600.

Camillus was the moving spirit through all. Besides that, he was engaged in preparing new and more explicit statutes for the better government and discipline of the Order. These were carried into effect at the end of the year 1600.

For seven laborious, fruitful years the founder bore the chief burden; and feeling that old age and increasing infirmities made urgent war on his brave spirit, he resigned the office of General of the Order. His circular letter has been preserved:— "Very Rev. Fathers,—To my great joy, I have resigned the Generalship; I hope it will be for the glory of God, the good of the Order, and my own good in particular. You must unite with me in thanking the Lord, and in praying that I may reap the fruit from this step which our Blessed Saviour wills. I, still remain to you the loving father that I always was. God bless you.

"Your Reverences' Brother in Christ,

"CAMILLUS DE LELLIS.

"Rome, 14th October, 1607."

A BLESSED EVENTIDE.

"Now," said the Saint, on the day of his resignation, "I have nothing else to do but to bewail my sins before God, to unite myself perfectly to Him, to fill my sack with such good works as I am permitted to attempt, and to be prepared for judgment."

Freed from responsibility, he felt himself bound to unsparing labour as a simple member. "Our Father Camillus," wrote a brother from Milan, "is wonderfully well, and thinks so little of himself that we admire him beyond words. The amount of work he goes through is astonishing. He is on guard every night, and never sleeps more than four hours. He preaches every day to the poor, with his beloved crucifix in his hand. He does everything, spiritual and temporal, for the sick and dying, never leaving many of them till he lays them in the coffin."

In thoughtfulness and in minute observance of the numberless lesser wants and wishes of the sufferers Camillus was still pre-eminent. He hid the signs of his failing health sedulously until a proposal was forced on him by the consultors that he should carry out a visitation of the house of the Order at Genoa. He completed the visitation and sent his report to the consultors, adding, as if chiding them for having appointed him to a position of implicit, if only temporary, superiority, "It is time that I should attend to my own soul; and this, not in order to avoid fatigue, but for the glory of His Divine Majesty, my own salvation, and that of the Order."

It was "the beginning of the end." He was his own cheerful self among his patients, but they noticed that now "he often had to drag himself from bed to bed by the help of his hands." They begged him to be merciful to the agony he must be enduring, but he hushed them smilingly with his familiar words, "My children I am your willing servant. I will do all I can to serve you." One of the Fathers wrote, "I do not know what more the most loving parents could do for an only child than Father Camillus did for each of our patients in San Spirito. You would imagine that all this care and interest was wrapt up in the life of each poor man whom he hung over, and that he had no present thought for anything else on earth. Two or three times he fell down from fatigue, and even his life was in danger."

As months glided by, the rapid decline was visible. His abhorrence for eating became insurmountable; the wound

extended nearly round his leg, it was putrid, corrosive, and deep; yet the woman who washed the bandages, which were saturated with matter, said that they bore a sweet fragrance—evident token of his great sanctity.

Internal diseases were also manifesting themselves. In spite of these sufferings, he consented through obedience when the Fathers entreated him to come and lend some aid to the houses in Abruzzo; for through that district, especially in his native Bocchianico, hundreds were dying of famine. He went, and an enduring memory exists of the uncounted miracles that followed his presence and his prayers. The houses of the Order, which had multiplied through Italy, longed for a visit from the Founder, but Camillus knew that he had barely time to return to Rome to die.

So exhausted did he appear after the fatigue of his journey, that it seemed a risk to indulge his yearning to give a last pledge to the hospitals. He was helped into San Spirito—and could hardly tear himself away, “God knows,” he said, “how gladly I would stay here, but as obedience tears me from you, my heart will be with you.”

On the 1st May, 1614, he asked for the last anointing. The next day he was told that the doctors might be able to prolong his life, though he could not recover. He answered cheerfully, in the words of the Psalm, “I rejoice at those things that are said to me. We shall go into the House of the Lord.”

He used his remaining strength in writing to beg prayers for his happy death, wherever he relied on obtaining them. But he had not counted on the response—the crowds who hastened to get a last blessing from the dying Saint. Still, his soul was so closely united to the fast approaching eternity, that the kindly glance, the short, kind farewell that he would not refuse while he had the least influence to be used for God, were scarcely interruptions to his unbroken intercourse with the Best Beloved above.

He had had a picture painted, which hung before him during these waning hours. It showed the crucifix with angels on either side holding golden chalices to catch the Blood that flowed from the sacred wounds. The Blessed Virgin and St. Michael were at the foot of the cross. Between them, at the instance of the Saint’s confessor, the artist represented Camillus kneeling and uttering the words of the “Te Deum”: Spare Thy servant whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy Precious Blood.

Saturday, 12th July, found him sinking slowly. He spoke as an angel might speak of the love and hope that gladden the death-bed. “I will come to Thee, O Lord,” he often said. “Not when I please but when Thou pleasest.” The next day his acts of faith were almost continual, still retaining his favourite aspirations, “I pray Thee, O Eternal Father, to pardon and save me, through the Precious Blood of Thy Son.”

Monday dawned—his last day on earth. Mass was said in his room as usual. A strangely solemn Mass it was, for the Saint twice prayed aloud, “Pray, pray earnestly, that the Lord may save me!” And again, at the Elevation, he cried, “O Lord! have mercy on me, through Thy Precious Blood!”

At midday he made an effort to join in the “Angelus,” and, finding that his tongue was nearly paralysed, he begged the Fathers to replace each other in saying prayers and litanies beside him. Evening saw him lingering in peace and prayer. At 10 o’clock, p.m., he suddenly stretched out his arms in the form of a cross. The attendants began the recommendation of the soul departing, and with the words, “Most Precious Blood! Jesus! Mary! Adorable Trinity! St. Michael!” on his lips, he lay gently back, and closed his eyes for ever, with a happy smile, while the Father Minister pronounced the invocation, “May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and cheerful countenance.” The Saint, whose crown was brilliant with charity’s purest gold, stood in the presence of Him who had guided His faithful servant through many thorny ways by the appealing petition for the sorrowing, “Whatsoever you do for the least of these, you do it unto Me.”

It was the 14th July, 1614—the sixty-fifth year of the Saint’s life, and the fortieth after his conversion. He was canonised by Pope Benedict XIV., who ordered that his feast should be kept on the 18th July.

HISTORY OF THE ORDER

During the seventeenth century, war, famine and death wrought frightful havoc throughout Europe. The much-dreaded plague proved especially disastrous; and fearful was the toll demanded by death. In some of the cities entire streets lay deserted, while populous villages became desolate. The cause of this havoc was the absolute helplessness of medical science and the lack of a sense of social responsibility on the part of those able to lend assistance. St. Camillus had foretold that a

future period would prove the necessity and importance of the Order. His prophecy came true. The work accomplished by the Order during the widespread epidemics in the large cities of Italy, forms one of the most thrilling chapters in the history of Christian charity. Miracles of sacrifice and self-abnegation were wrought; the Order offered its best members. In more than one instance its very existence seemed at stake, so completely had its monasteries been depopulated in the service of humanity. A few facts will serve to sketch a faint picture of the activities of the Order during the times of the pestilence.

Even during the life-time of the Saint, a number of his spiritual sons had sacrificed their lives in the combat against the disease, as in Rome, in Naples, and Nola. In 1624, eleven religious died in Palermo, victims to their labours of love in nursing the plague-stricken. During the epidemic of 1630, following the Mantuan war of Succession, the death-toll was exceptionally great, and ten Camillians lost their lives. Milan was still more terribly visited by the plague. The overcrowded hospitals, the hospital colonies beyond its walls, were totally unequal to the task demanded of them. Of the fifty Camillians who there exercised the duties of their calling, twenty succumbed. The most illustrious among the victims of the plague was Brother Olimpio Nofri. When the plague had broken out, he asked as a special favour, that he might be permitted to nurse the sick. He remained at his post of duty day and night almost without interruption. When he noticed positive symptoms of the Black Death in himself, he asked for the Last Sacraments, without even retiring to bed. He still continued his labours until he dragged himself to the cemetery, where, by a supreme effort of his waning strength, he dug his own grave and cast himself beside it, clasping the cross of the Order in his hands. His companions finding him in this condition wished to carry him home, but he resisted, saying: "Do not approach me, I am covered with ulcers and am about to die. Hasten to the aid of those who are in need of you. Let me die, alone with my Saviour." He then begged them that after his death they should roll his body into the grave and cover it with clay.

Father Marapodio displayed similar heroism. During the period of the plague he was untiring in his priestly ministrations. When he became afflicted by the malady, he still laboured on until his strength failed him. Then he returned home, through streets where death-like stillness reigned. Finding the rooms vacant and forsaken, he supposed all had fallen victims of the plague. He then dragged himself to the church, received Holy Communion and also consumed all the consecrated particles. Some members of the Community, returning, found him lifeless at the foot of the altar, with his face turned to the floor, his arms extended wide.

Nurses for the plague-stricken had been sent from Rome to Bologna. The municipal authorities offered a salary for the services rendered, but the Fathers declined to accept any remuneration. The council then appealed to the Fathers that they should accept complete charge of the entire health situation. Only upon the explicit wish of the Papal Delegate, they acceded to this request. The Superior, Father Zatio, being appointed governor and health commissioner, ordered the streets to be cleaned, the corpses to be removed from the homes and public places, where many had been permitted to lie about; he even provided for careful disinfection. In the accomplishment of these most opportune functions, his brethren nobly supported him, without, however, neglecting their priestly duties and the care of the sick.

In Florence, too, death demanded its toll. Five members of the Order died nursing the sick. In the cities of Lucca, Modena and Rome the labours and zeal were similar, but the victims and losses as well.

In 1656 and 1657 the most important cities of Italy were again visited by that dread scourge of God. In Naples, where the municipal authorities had done little toward checking the epidemic, the care of the sick became exceedingly difficult, and the death-toll became alarmingly great. Some of the Camillians served the plague-stricken in the hospitals, and pest-houses; others had parishes or sections of the city assigned to them. The chronicler of the Order makes mention of one hundred priests, who, at that period, lost their lives, and the number of Brothers was probably as great again. The Genoese Abate Merello records that so many Camillians at that time sacrificed their lives in the cause of charity, that their houses in Genoa were nearly depopulated. "Even the novices proved worthy of the traditions of the Order, and ten of them sacrificed their young lives to God."

In 1732 several Fathers died in Rome, as victims to their calling, while, in 1734, during the plague in Messina, twelve Fathers, two Brothers and eight novices died within a few months as martyrs of charity.

Thanks to the marked developments in hygiene, Europe has not again experienced such ravages by the plague. Instead, however, other infectious diseases took their toll, like the cholera during the nineteenth century. In Italy, the Camillians were the first nurses and chaplains in the “cholera hospitals.” A great amount of charitable work was done, particularly in the years 1832, 1835, 1837, 1839, 1854, 1855, 1866, 1867, 1873, 1884, 1887. The cities of Genoa, Naples, Rome, Messina, Palermo, Cattano, Verona, Padua, Torino, Casale, and Cremona were scenes of the activity of the Camillians. On these occasions also great numbers died as victims to their calling. Prominent in Rome was Father Augustine Lana, renowned for his patriotic and theological researches; in Naples, Father Raphael Danise, Bishop of Casano, at the outbreak of the cholera left his Episcopal See and laboured as a simple Camillian in the lazarettos of the plague-stricken. The sacrifices required of the ministers of the sick were enormous; sacrifices of young, noble, precious lives, offered for humanity. Still the records of the Order show a rapid growth. In all cities of importance in Italy, the Order erected establishments soon after the plague. In Sicily alone it numbered seventeen convents and two novitiates. From Italy it spread into Spain. In 1634, the first convent was founded in Madrid and became a vast centre for the care of the poor and convalescent. Other foundations with the same end in view were made in Alcala, Sárágossa, Barcelona, Cordova, Murviedro, Buytrago, Santa Cruz de Mudela and Valencia. In 1750 a new Province arose in Portugal.

The Motherhouse in Spain caused the first convent in South America to be founded in 1712, in Lima, the capital of Peru. There the Fathers soon became known and appreciated, under the title: “Fathers of a Happy Death.” In the course of some decades, other foundations were added to the Motherhouse— e.g., in Popogani, Arequipa, Quamanga, Quito, Quayquillo Truxillo and elsewhere. During the time of the struggle for independence in Callao, occurred the death of Father Maria Lux, a martyr to the seal of the confessional.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, the Order numbered approximately ninety foundations, with fifteen novitiates. About this time, a Community of religious women, under the Camillian Rule, came into being, with Camilla Grimaldi as their foundress. At the time of the war of liberation, Oblate Sisters of St. Camillus were actively engaged in the many lazarettos, meriting for themselves profound gratitude from the allied rulers of Austria, Prussia and Russia. Two separate branches of Camillian Sisters are active in Italy—the one with a Motherhouse in Lucca; the other, called “Daughters of St. Camillus,” with a Motherhouse in Rome. The latter have sixteen foundations; of which eleven are in Italy and five in South America.

In 1869 the Camillians gained a footing in France. The rapid progress of the early years in that country was only checked by the anti-Catholic laws of the ‘eighties. Today, at Lyons and at Angers, the Camillians exercise their ministry in hospices for the sick and incurable; at Theoule, in maintaining and serving a convalescent home at Marbach, where a well-equipped preventorium for boys in ill-health is in their charge; and at Niederviller, in caring for alcohol sufferers. At Arras, they visit the hospitals and provide meals for two hundred poor each day. The Province has its novitiate and juniorate houses in Belgium—in Tournai and Exaerde respectively.

It is in the French Province that the nucleus of the first English-speaking foundations is being formed. In a few years Ireland and Great Britain will have their Camillian houses, and will have occasion to appreciate the sublime ministry of the Order of the Red Cross.

The Order at the present day is composed of six provinces— the Roman, Piedmontese, Lombardo-Venetian, French, German and Spanish—having houses in nine European countries, and in three American. It exercises both the spiritual and corporal ministry in twenty-four institutions under its complete control— hospitals, clinics, sanatoria, hospices and dispensaries. In addition, the Camillians exercise the spiritual ministry in sixty public hospitals. In Lima (Peru), for example, the spiritual ministry of all the hospitals is entrusted to them, and, in Berlin, of nearly all.

The Camillian Rule has remained as laid down in the Bull, “Illius pro gregis,” of Gregory XIV., and in the Bull, “Suprema dispositione,” of Clement VIII., except for some modifications, subsequently authorised by the Holy See. After one year’s novitiate, the simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are pronounced, as well as the fourth vow, to serve the sick, even the plague-stricken. Three years afterwards the vows are renewed in solemn profession.

The Camillian vocation comprises both the spiritual and corporal care of the sick and afflicted. The priests of the Order

do the spiritual ministry, and the Brothers provide for the corporal needs of the sick. In order, however, that both may fulfil the obligation of their fourth vow, the duties of the priests include some of the corporal works of mercy, and the Brothers exercise some functions of the spiritual ministry, such as, for example, preparing the sick for the reception of the Sacraments. Mention must be made of one of the many privileges accorded by the Holy See to the Order: that of the Portable Altar.

Happy the sick in whose town or district there is a Camillian convent. In the hospitals and institutions under their charge, the Camillians have the unique privilege of saying Mass on a portable altar; they exercise the same privilege in private houses, in the sick-room, by consent of the diocesan authorities.

St. Camillus exercised his heroic zeal in the hospitals, in private houses, and even in visiting the prisons. His sons carry on that work today, and seek to extend the embrace of their charity to every race and condition of men. That God will provide the means, in the sanctity of the members and in the increase of vocations, is their earnest prayer.

With the aim of propagating the devotion to St. Camillus, the Order publishes a number of reviews in different languages. For English-speaking readers “The Camillian Post” provides an exact and interesting source of information concerning the Order and its activities.

THE FIRST RED CROSS.

We are all more or less familiar with the work of the modern Red Cross organisations, especially with its efficient efforts in succouring the wounded and dying soldiers on the battlefields in the recent World War. Even the school-children are annually reminded of its ideal when they participate in the sale of Red Cross stamps. Yet, if we were asked to explain the origin of the idea of the Red Cross, we would have to trace it to the sixteenth century, to a Catholic source—to the great heart and vigorous mind of the Saint who conceived it. The work of his biographers and disciples, Cicutelli and Dolera, proves that to Saint Camillus is due the credit of the first organised Red Cross in war, and that to this same great saint the idea of the first Field Ambulance can be readily traced.

The distinguishing badge Camillus chose for his Order to wear upon their black habits was a Red Cross, similar to those used by modern Red Cross organisations. When Camillus chose the Red Cross for his followers, it was to him the military sign of the Crusaders: he himself had done battle against the Turk. It has come down to us through the wars of nearly four centuries, borne on the habits of his spiritual sons, who have, meanwhile, carried it on to almost every battlefield of Europe, and, finally, into the French, Belgian, Italian and German trenches of our own day, in the World War.

To give a few instances of the aid rendered by the Camillians on the battlefield, we quote from Cicutelli: “In the year 1595 Pope Clement sent some Italian troops into Hungary to recover Strigonia, and thought proper to supply them with some of our religious to take care of the sick and dying soldiers, besides their other clergy—that is, in modern language, a Field Ambulance, composed of members of a nursing Order, as well as the usual military chaplain. So it is plain that the first Field Ambulance dates back to the sixteenth century, and was the result of the efforts of St. Camillus to succour the wounded soldiers on the battlefield. They fulfilled their task with the greatest possible advantage to the sick, wounded, and dying soldiers. Not content with administering the Sacraments to them, and recommending their souls, they also did everything they could for them in the hospitals of Vienna, Convare, Ala, Possonin, and in the tents under the walls of Strigonia; in the boats and in the waggons, during the march, exposed to the wind, the cold, and the rain, with a diligence and attention always increasing in proportion to the distress of those who were suffering.

In 1601, Pope Clement and Ferdinand, Grand Duke of Tuscany, resolved to send some Italian troops to recover Canizza, a place of importance in Croatia, which had been a little before taken by the Turk. Both asked Camillus for some of our religious to take care of the sick and dying soldiers. Eight were given to the Pope and five to the Grand Duke, and the two parties fulfilled perfectly their appointed task, labouring without rest, and undergoing such fatigues, that one priest of each party died....”

One more instance, out of many, of the Camillians’ services on the battlefield: At Solferino, in 1859, when 40,000 men were put out of action in one day—to say nothing of those who died of fever and thirst—there were 100 Camillians,

scattered between Verona, Mantua and Cremona, who applied themselves to relieve so much suffering. The Red Crosses on their black habits must have been seen by Henry Dunant many times, as he witnessed all the horrors of the battle. It was after this battle that the meritorious Swiss philosopher wrote his book, "A Souvenir of Solferino," published at Geneva in 1862, in which he cried out in horror to the whole world, and, as a result awakened the governments to use the great means at their disposal to organise an international association for the succouring of the wounded in war. And, says Mrs. Ernest Oldmeadow, in her book, "The First Red Cross": "When the Red Cross was chosen by the Genevan Conference as the symbol of the organisation, it is to be regretted that no acknowledgment was made by Henry Dunant of the Catholic source from which the idea was drawn." But the official world, at least, recognised the work of the Camillians, as the following quotation, from Giacomini's book, "Precursori della Croce Rossa," shows:.....On this occasion the Emperor of Austria expressed to their Superior, Father Camillus Bresziani, through his delegate, Tordis, his full and sovereign satisfaction and his admiration of the Order of St. Camillus for its truly meritorious services, full of utter self-sacrifice, during the late war....." The official Gazette of Verona, for January 7, 1860, rendered a similar tribute of praise and thanks.

In 1886, Pope Leo XIII. declared Saint Camillus Patron, in the universal Church, of the Sick and of Hospitals. And, in 1930, Red Cross workers acclaimed with joy the decision of Pius XI. in declaring him patron of all who nurse the sick.

In order to acknowledge his idea of the Red Cross—the sign of the Redemption, in the colour of Our Lord's Precious Blood—as our strength and support in suffering, and as an incentive to acts of charity, the Holy Father has granted to the priests of the Order of St. Camillus the privilege of bestowing a special blessing on Red Crosses, of a small size, which are known as the "Little Red Crosses of St. Camillus."

CHRONOLOGY.

- 1550 Birth of Camillus.
- 1575 His conversion.
- 1582 Camillus receives inspiration to found Congregation.
- 1584 Camillus is ordained priest and founds the Congregation.
- 1586 Congregation confirmed by Sixtus V. and permission given to wear the Red Cross.
- 1591 Congregation erected into an Order; Camillus and his Companions pronounce their vows.
- 1614 Death of St. Camillus.
- 1742 Benedict XIV. issues Decree of Beatification.
- 1746 Canonisation of St. Camillus.
- 1886 Leo XIII. declares St. Camillus Patron of the Sick and of Hospitals.
- 1905 Pius X. grants privilege of the Portable Altar to the Camillians.
- 1930 St. Camillus declared Patron of Health Services and of all who assist the Sick.

Nihil Obstat:
J. Donovan,
Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur:
* D. Mannix,
Archiepiscopus Melbournensis.
